

Park rental fees increasing in Village of Lewiston

Leaders say extra money necessary to offset maintenance costs

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Trustees in the Village of Lewiston voted Monday to raise the facility rental rate for Marilyn Toohey Park, Lewiston Landing, Hennepin Park, Academy Park and Richard F. Soluri Park.

The new fee schedule is shown. Park rentals were \$50 per day, plus an additional \$25 for the Alphonso I. DiMino Memorial Band Shell at Academy Park.

“We have realized that we are charging way too low to rent out our pavilions,” Mayor Anne Welch said. “For instance, at the (Marilyn Toohey Park) playground/splash pad back here (behind the Red Brick), the pavilion we rent out to people for birthday parties, and it does very well. It’s booked all summer. But, we only charge \$50 for the party. When we researched other municipal parks, they charge a lot more than that.”

Welch cited the Town of Lewiston, which she said, “rents out the pavilion down on River Road for \$250 for resident, and \$350 for non-resident.”

She added, “Kiwanis (Park), the concrete building down there, it’s \$100 to rent or \$150 for a non-resident.”

“Our playground, obviously, we have an all-inclusive playground with a splash pad, and you can rent the pavilion for birthday parties.”

“When (Clerk) Shannon (Fundis) researched the other municipal parks and people that hold birthday party events, it came in a lot higher than what we’re considering raising it to.”

Trustee Nick Conde noted that, at indoor facilities, “parties are usually ... \$30 to \$35 a head for a basic package. If you have 10 kids at a party – and everybody knows there’s more than 10 kids at a party – it’s \$350 right there. That’s your average birthday place.”

Fundis noted there is no per-person fee or cap on attendees using the Marilyn Toohey Park amenities, and people can bring their own food.

“We have nothing to maintain our parks,” Welch said of future funding mechanisms. “For the wood chips alone out there, we have to spend like \$30,000 because they have to be specific wood chips. You can’t just go and buy wood chips. It’s costly to do that. We spend like \$6,000 in water in the summer that the village absorbs.”

Water at the splash pad typically is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. during the summer and warmer shoulder season months.

“We need a fund to maintain the property, so if a piece of equipment breaks, we have funding to repair it or replace it,” Welch said.

Deputy Mayor Vic Eydt noted, “Just to give you an idea of some of the costs of the playground – people just don’t realize how ex-

VILLAGE PARK	Family Functions		Non-Profit/Charity		Business/Corporation	
	Resident	Non-Resident	Resident	Non-Resident	Resident	Non-Resident
ACADEMY PARK						
Pavilion	\$200	\$250	No Fee	\$50	\$250	\$300
Band Shell & Park	N/A	N/A	No Fee	\$50	\$250	\$300
Park Only	N/A	N/A	No Fee	\$50	\$100	\$150
MARILYN TOOHEY PARK						
Pavilion	\$150	\$200	No Fee	\$25	\$200	\$250
LEWISTON LANDING						
Lower Pavilion*	\$100	\$125	No Fee	\$25	\$150	\$175
HENNEPIN PARK						
w/ Gazebo	\$100	\$125	No Fee	\$25	\$150	\$175
RICHARD F. SOLURI PARK						
	\$100	\$125	No Fee	\$25	\$150	\$175

pensive it is – just the drums out there, the drum sticks that are attached, we lost one. That was \$350 to get another drum stick. That’s just a small part of it.”

He added, The comments we’ve gotten from the people last year – we rented it roughly about 75 times, somewhere around there – most of them said they thought it was really super-cheap.

“We’ve got to have something. And even with upping these prices, the price on it, it’s not going to cover the maintenance of that.”

Conde said, “That puts us to about \$15,000. So, if we did 74 parties at the new number, it will cost about \$15,000 for the maintenance, cleaning, water. It almost doesn’t cover it at that.”

Welch said, “We don’t charge charities; businesses and non-residents, we’ll charge them.”

“We’re just trying to do enough to maintain what we have. You know, obviously, these are very costly properties, and there has to be some kind of a maintenance fund to take care of these properties.”

Kathy Harold lives across the street from the playground, and donated money toward its completion. She said, “I was in earlier today to tell you that I protested you increasing the amount of money you are charging children at that park: \$150 we consider exorbitant.”

“I was reading in the paper, you said, ‘Oh, a piece of equipment breaks. What do we do?’ Well, the community came out and donated to that park in the middle of the pandemic. All these organizations that have plaques on those things. Don’t you think if (you said), ‘Oh, this slide is broken or something,’ they will come forth? I know they will.”

She said, “We knew money was being exchanged. We heard it was expensive for the water. We felt that \$50 per party was at least paying for the water for it. We also heard several people, who didn’t know we donated to anything, talking about how happy they were that they could finally have a birthday party for their kids after the pandemic, because they couldn’t have parties for their kids.”

“Now, families with young children don’t have a lot of money for their parties. We felt that \$50 was a pretty good price, and you were making money on it.”

Welch replied, “We don’t make money on it, because it costs more just for the water.”

Harold said that, while inside facilities do charge more per per-

son, “They provide plates, cups, party favors, somebody to manage the parties, pizza and other things. So, yeah, maybe it’s going to cost \$200, \$250 – if these people can afford it – but they get a lot of other things. The bowling alleys, they get bowling balls, they get the bumper things; they get all these extras. If it rains, they don’t have to worry about that party being washed out.”

She also said it’s cheaper to rent space at a Niagara County park.

“I am afraid that what’s going to happen is – you know, you’re the municipality; you’re in charge – you go and charge \$150 for that, and some of these young mothers go and start to look around like I did. I found all this online, and made a couple phone calls. You are not going to get the parties you’ve been getting. At least, (with the current park rental fee), you’re getting something. You up it to \$150, you’re not going to have anything.”

“You’re welcome to do whatever you want with what was donated, but I’m afraid you’re not going to get what you got – and Lewiston is going to look really bad. Right now, we have a reputation of being very

welcoming, all-inclusive. People start to look and see that we’re charging a lot for a little kid’s park, for little kids parties, and we’re going to look really rotten.”

Conde said Harold “had some good points.” Welch asked the board about lowering the Marilyn Toohey Park rate. However, Department of Public Works Superintendent Anthony Mang cautioned that venue’s upkeep might get even pricier in time.

“The repairs to the splash pad are expensive when they come around,” he said. “They’re not cheap.”

Welch said, “This is our most costly park.”

Fundis noted the water is “running 12 hours a day, every single day. Even if there’s not kids in it, they’re still running by it and turning the water on and running away. I don’t think I’ve ever been here and not seen that water running. So, with wear – with that much use – everything needs to be repaired.”

As such, trustees approved the fee increase as proposed.

Welch said, “We’re going to need maintenance in that park, and if we don’t have a fund to fix it, then we shut the thing off and nobody gets to use it.”

Trustee Jim Fittante said, “You’ve got to compare this to village centers and town centers, and we’re right in line, if not lower, than the majority of villages and towns in the area.”

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Think about it, if “foods” are processed so that they won’t spoil for months or years, doesn’t it make sense that your body will have a tough time breaking them down too? What cannot be digested causes indigestion and a myriad of other symptoms. **When foods digest properly, there is no gas produced.** Gas appears when food rots as with the fermentation of carbohydrates (sugars and starches) and putrefaction of proteins (meat, fish, eggs, cheese, legumes, nuts and seeds).

However, eating fresh or frozen whole foods without additives such as food coloring, pesticides, preservatives, synthetic vitamins, artificial flavorings, flavor enhancers and other chemicals, provide your body with the necessary building blocks to repair and rebuild as well as detoxify.

Fresh fruits and vegetables contain enzymes that assist the digestive process. So, add more fresh food to your diet. Eat less processed food, you will be healthier, the gut can heal and not be a source of distress. Most of all, eliminate sugar as it ruins your health in a many ways.

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